

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF RUSKIN, INC

ARTICLE 1 – NAME, PURPOSE AND DENOMINATIONAL POLICY

SECTION 1.01—NAME

This congregation of believers shall be known as the First Baptist Church of Ruskin, Inc., Hillsborough County, Florida, United States of America.

SECTION 1.02—PURPOSE

This congregation is organized as a church exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Revenue Law), including, but not limited to, for such purposes, the establishing and maintaining of religious worship, the building of churches, parsonages, schools, chapels, radio stations, television stations, rescue missions, print shops, daycare centers, and camps; the evangelizing of the unsaved by the proclaiming of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; the educating of believers in a manner consistent with the requirements of Holy Scripture, both in Sunday and weekday schools of Christian education; and the maintaining of missionary activities in the United States and any foreign country.

SECTION 1.03—DENOMINATIONAL POLICY

The government of this church and corporation is vested in the body of member believers who comprise it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body. We adopt the Bible as our only and final rule of faith and practice. All affiliations with other associations or organizations shall be on the ground of fellowship only.

ARTICLE 2 – STATEMENT OF FAITH

SECTION 2.01—STATEMENT OF FAITH

The following comprise the Scriptural beliefs of this church and its members.

(A) The Holy Scriptures

We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the verbally and plenary inspired Word of God. The Scriptures are inerrant, infallible and God-breathed and, therefore, are the final authority for faith and life. The sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament are the complete and divine revelation of God to Man. The Scriptures shall be interpreted according to their normal grammatical-historical meaning. The King James Version of the Bible shall be the official and only translation used by the church. (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21)

(B) Dispensationalism

We believe that the Scriptures interpreted in their natural, literal sense reveal divinely determined dispensations, or rules of life, which define man's responsibilities in successive ages. These dispensations are not ways of salvation, but rather are divinely ordered stewardships by which God directs man according to His purpose. Three of these dispensations—the law, the church, and the kingdom—are the subjects of detailed revelation in Scripture. (Gen. 1:28; 1 Cor. 9:17; 2 Cor. 3:9-18; Gal. 3:13-25; Eph. 1:10; 3:2-10; Col. 1:24-25, 27; Rev. 20:2-6)

(C) The Godhead

We believe in one triune God, eternally existing in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—each co-eternal in being, co-identical in nature, coequal in power and glory, and having the same attributes and perfections. (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; John 14:10, 26)

(D) The Person and Work of Christ

1. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man, without ceasing to be God, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful men. (Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-2, 14; 2 Cor. 5:19-21; Gal. 4:4-5; Phil. 2:5-8)
2. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a representative, vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice; and, that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead. (Acts 2:18-36; Rom. 3:24-25; 1 Pet. 2:24; Eph. 1:7; 1 Peter 1:3-5)
3. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where, as our High Priest, He fulfills the ministry of Representative, Intercessor, and Advocate. (Acts 1:9-10; Heb. 9:24; 7:25; Rom. 8:34; 1 John 2:1-2)

(E) The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

1. We believe that the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and, that He is the Supernatural Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ, indwelling and sealing them unto the day of redemption. (John 16:8-11; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; 2 Cor. 3:6; Eph. 1:13-14)
2. We believe that He is the divine Teacher who assists believers to understand and appropriate the Scriptures and that it is the privilege and duty of all the saved to be filled with the Spirit. (Eph. 1:17-18; 5:18; 1 John 2:20, 27)
3. We believe that God is sovereign in the bestowal of spiritual gifts to every believer. God uniquely uses evangelists, pastors, and teachers to equip believers in the assembly in order that they can do the work of the ministry. (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11, 28; Eph. 4:7-12)

4. We believe that the sign gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues and the gift of healing were temporary. Speaking in tongues was never the common or necessary sign of the baptism or filling of the Holy Spirit, and that ultimate deliverance of the body from sickness or death awaits the consummation of our salvation in the resurrection, though God frequently chooses to answer the prayers of believers for physical healing. (1 Cor. 1:22; 13:8; 14:21-22)

(F) The Total Depravity of Man

We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God; but that in Adam's sin the human race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God. Man is totally depraved and, of himself, utterly unable to remedy his lost condition. (Gen. 1:26-27; Rom. 3:22-23; 5:12; 6:23; Eph. 2:1-3; 4:17-19)

(G) Salvation

We believe that salvation is the gift of God brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose precious blood was shed on Calvary for the forgiveness of our sins. We believe that salvation is received by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ without benefit of any human works (John 1:12; Eph. 1:7; 2:8-10; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 1 John 1:9)

(H) The Eternal Security and Assurance of Believers

1. We believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever. (John 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Rom. 8:1; 38-39; 1 Cor. 1:4-8; 1 Pet. 1:4-5)
2. We believe that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion to the flesh. (Rom. 6:1-16, 13:13-14; Gal. 5:13; Titus 2:11-15)

(I) The Church

1. We believe that the local church, which is the body and the espoused bride of Christ, is solely made up of born-again (saved) persons. (1 Cor. 12:12-14; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:25-27)
2. We believe that the establishment and continuance of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures. (Acts 14:27; 20:17, 28-32; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-11)
3. We believe in the autonomy of the local church free of any external authority or control. (Acts 13:1-4; 15:19-31; 20:28; Rom. 16:1, 4; 1 Cor. 3:9, 16; 5:4-7, 13; 1 Pet. 5:1-4)
4. We recognize water baptism (immersion) and the Lord's Supper as the Scriptural ordinances of obedience for the church in this age. (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42; 18:18; 1 Cor. 11:23-26)

(J) Separation

We believe that all the saved should live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon their Savior and Lord. God commands His people to separate from all religious apostasy, all worldly and sinful pleasures, practices, and associations, and to refrain from all immodest and immoderate appearances, piercings, and bodily markings. (Rom. 12:1-2; 14:13; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11; Lev. 19:28; 1 Cor. 6:19-20)

(K) The Second Advent of Christ

We believe in that *blessed hope*, the personal, imminent return of Christ who will rapture His church prior to the seven-year tribulation period. At the end of the Tribulation, Christ will personally and visibly return with His saints, to establish His earthly Messianic Kingdom which was promised to the nation of Israel. (Ps. 89:3-4; Dan. 2:31-45; Zech. 14:4-11; I Thess. 1:10; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Titus 2:13; Rev. 3:10; 19:11-16; 20:1-6)

(L) The Eternal State

1. We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life, and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment. (Matt. 25:46; John 5:28, 29; 11:25-26; Rev. 20:5-6, 12-13)
2. We believe that the souls of the redeemed are, at death, absent from the body and present with the Lord, where in conscious bliss they await the first resurrection, when spirit, soul, and body are reunited to be glorified forever with the Lord. (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; 3:21; I Thess. 4:16-17; Rev. 20:4-6)
3. We believe that the souls of unbelievers remain, after death, in conscious punishment and torment until the second resurrection, when with soul and body reunited, they shall appear at the Great White Throne Judgment, and shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, not to be annihilated, but to suffer everlasting conscious punishment and torment. (Matt. 25:41-46; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:19-26; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Jude 6-7; Rev. 20:11-15)

(M) The Personality of Satan

We believe that Satan is a fallen angel, the author of sin and the cause of the Fall of Man; that he is the open and declared enemy of God and man; and that he shall be eternally punished in the Lake of Fire. (Job 1:6-7; Isa. 14:12-17; Matt. 4:2-11; 25:41; Rev. 20:10)

(N) Creation

We believe that God created the universe as described in the Genesis account. (Gen. 1-2; Ex. 20:11)

(O) Civil Government

We believe that God has ordained and created all authority consisting of three basic institutions: 1) the home, 2) the church, and 3) the state. Every person is subject to these authorities, but all (including the authorities themselves) are answerable to God and governed by His Word. God has given each institution specific Biblical responsibilities and balanced those responsibilities with the understanding that no institution has the right to infringe upon the other. The home, the church, and the state are equal and sovereign in their respective Biblically assigned spheres of responsibility under God. (Rom. 13:1-7; Eph. 5:22-24; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 2:13-14)

(P) Human Sexuality

1. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance. (Gen. 2:24; Gen. 19:5, 13; Gen. 26:8-9; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1:26-29; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:9; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4)
2. We believe that the only legitimate marriage is the joining of one natural born adult male and one natural born adult female. (Gen. 2:24; Rom 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:10; Eph. 5:22-33)
3. We believe that marriage is a permanent, sacred, covenant relationship between one man and one woman. We believe that God offers his blessing in and through marriage. As such, we believe that a wedding ceremony is an act of worship of our creator God. Since our wedding ceremonies are acts of worship, we will permit the use of our facilities only to members in good standing, (those who agree with our statement of faith.) All wedding ceremonies in our facilities, or, on our property, must be presided over by one of the church's pastors. (Mal. 2:2:14; Matt. 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-8; Prov. 18:22, 19:14).

(Q) Family Relationships

1. We believe that men and women are spiritually equal in position before God but that God has ordained distinct and separate spiritual functions for men and women in the home and the church. The husband is to be the leader of the home, and men are to be the leaders (pastors and deacons) of the church. Accordingly, only men are eligible for licensure and ordination by the church. (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 3:4-5, 12)
2. We believe that God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. The husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church. The wife is to submit herself to the Scriptural leadership of her husband as the church submits to the headship of Christ. Children are a heritage from the Lord. Parents are responsible for teaching their children spiritual and moral values and leading them, through consistent lifestyle example and appropriate discipline, including Scriptural corporal correction. (Gen. 1:26-28; Ex. 20:12; Deut. 6:4-9; Ps. 127:3-5; Prov. 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; Mk. 10:6-12; I Cor. 7:1-16; Eph. 5:21-33; 6:1-4, Col. 3:18-21; Heb. 13:4; I Pet. 3:1-7)

(R) Divorce and Remarriage

We believe that God disapproves of and forbids divorce and intends marriage to last until one of the spouses dies. Divorce and remarriage is regarded as adultery except on the grounds of fornication, or desertion although divorced and remarried persons, or divorced persons, may hold positions of service in the church and

be greatly used of God for Christian service, they may not be considered for the offices of pastor or deacon. (Mal. 2:14-17; Matt. 19:3-12; Rom. 7:1-3; 1 Cor 7:10-15. 1 Tim. 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6)

(S) Abortion

We believe that human life begins at conception and that the unborn child is a living human being. Abortion constitutes the unjustified, unexcused taking of unborn human life. We reject any teaching that abortions of pregnancies due to rape, incest, birth defects, gender selection, population control, or mental well being of the mother are acceptable. (Job 3:16; Ps. 51:5; 139:14-16; Isa. 44:24; 49:1, 5; Jer. 1:5; 20:15-18; Luke 1:44)

(T) Love

We believe that we should demonstrate love for others, not only toward fellow believers, but also toward both those who are not believers and those who oppose us. We are to deal with those who oppose us graciously, gently, patiently, and humbly. God forbids the stirring up of strife, the taking of revenge, or the threat or the use of violence as a means of resolving personal conflict or obtaining personal justice. Although God commands us to abhor sinful actions, we are to love and pray for any person who engages in such sinful actions. (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 5:44-48; Luke 6:31; John 13:34-35; Rom. 12:9-10; 17-21; 13:8-10; Phil. 2:2-4; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; Titus 3:2; 1 John 3:17-18)

(U) Lawsuits Between Believers

We believe that Christians are prohibited from bringing civil lawsuits against other Christians or the church to resolve personal disputes. We believe the church possesses all the resources necessary to resolve personal disputes between members. We do believe, however, that a Christian may seek compensation for injuries from another Christian's insurance company as long as the claim is pursued without malice or slander. (1 Cor. 6:1-8; Eph. 4:31-32)

(V) Missions

We believe that God has given the church a great commission to proclaim the Gospel to all nations so that there might be a great multitude from every nation, tribe, ethnic group, and language group who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. As ambassadors of Christ we must use all available means to go to the foreign nations and not wait for them to come to us. (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:20)

(W) Giving

We believe that every Christian, as a steward of that portion of God's wealth entrusted to him, is obligated to support his local church financially. We believe that God has established the tithe as a basis for giving, but that every Christian should also give other offerings sacrificially and cheerfully to the support of the church, the relief of those in need, and the spread of the Gospel. We believe that a Christian relinquishes all rights to direct the use of the tithe or offering once the gift has been made. (Gen. 14:20; Prov. 3:9-10; Acts 4:34-37; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7; Gal. 6:6; Eph. 4:28; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; 1 John 3:17)

SECTION 2.02—AUTHORITY OF STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Statement of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our faith. The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all that we believe. We do believe, however, that the foregoing Statement of Faith accurately represents the teaching of the Bible and, therefore, is binding upon all members.

ARTICLE 3 – MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 3.01—QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

All requests for membership must be approved by a unanimous vote of the members present. Voting will follow any regular service of the church. One negative vote is sufficient to postpone or refuse membership to a candidate. Those who object must meet with the pastor and deacons to explain their objections. The pastor and deacons can uphold or reject the negative vote and thereby bring their decision before the church at the next service after meeting with the objector. Membership shall be extended to all who have had and whose lives evidence a genuine experience of regeneration through faith in and acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior; and upon compliance with any one of the following conditions:

- (A) By baptism (immersion) as a true believer in Christ Jesus as personal Savior;
- (B) By letter of transfer from another Bible-believing church of like faith and practice, or other written statement of good standing from the prior church if the applicant has been baptized by immersion subsequent to a profession of faith;
- (C) By testimony of faith in Christ Jesus as personal Savior, having been baptized by immersion; or
- (D) By restoration, if having been removed from membership:
 - for non-attendance, upon majority vote of the congregation.
 - for those removed from membership through church discipline; after confession is made publicly before the church membership, of the sin, or sins, involved, and satisfactorily evidencing repentance for the sin.
 - those who are returned to the rolls by restoration may not vote in any matters of church business until they have regularly attended worship services for a period of one month.
- (E) As an associate member: students, or part time residents who are members of a church of like faith and practice in their place of residence.

SECTION 3.02—DUTIES OF A MEMBER

On becoming a member of this church, each one further covenants to love, honor, and esteem the pastor; to pray for him; to recognize his authority in spiritual affairs of the church; to cherish a brotherly love for all members of the church; to support the church through regular attendance, in prayer, tithes, offerings and with other financial support as the Lord enables; and in accordance with Biblical commands, to support through a lifestyle walk affirming the beliefs and practices of the church.

SECTION 3.03—PRIVILEGES OF MEMBERSHIP

- (A) Only members at least eighteen years of age who are physically present at a duly called meeting of the church shall be entitled to vote. There shall be no proxy or absentee voting. The eligible membership of the church has certain limited areas to exercise a vote. Members may not vote to initiate any church

action, rather the vote of a member is to confirm and ratify the direction of the church as determined by the pastor and the board of deacons.

- (B) This congregation functions not as a pure democracy, but as a body under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ and the direction of the pastor as the under shepherd with the counsel of the board of deacons. Determinations of the internal affairs of this church are ecclesiastical matters and shall be determined exclusively by the church's own rules and procedures. The pastor shall oversee and/or conduct all aspects of this church. The board of deacons shall give counsel and assistance to the pastor as requested by him.
- (C) Membership in this church does not afford the members with any property, contractual, or civil rights based on principles of democratic government. Although the general public is invited to all of the church's worship services, the church property remains private property. The pastor (or in his absence, an individual designated by the board of deacons) has the authority to suspend or revoke the right of any person, including a member, to enter or remain on church property. If after being notified of such a suspension or revocation, the person enters or remains on church property, the person may, in the discretion of the pastor (or in his absence, an individual designated by the board of deacons), be treated as a trespasser.
- (D) A member, upon five-business days prior written request made upon the church, may inspect or copy the prepared financial statements of the church, the minutes of the proceedings of church meetings, and the minutes of the proceedings of board meetings.
 1. A member may not, under any circumstances, inspect or copy any record relating to individual contributions to the church, the list of names and addresses of the church members, or the accounting books and financial records of the church.
 2. The church may impose a reasonable charge, covering the costs of labor and material, for copies of any documents provided to the member before releasing the copies to the member.

SECTION 3.04—DISCIPLINE OF A MEMBER

- (A) There shall be a discipline committee consisting of the pastor and the board of deacons. These men shall have sole authority in determining heretical deviations from the Statement of Faith. If the pastor or a deacon is the subject of a disciplinary matter, he shall not sit as a member of the discipline committee. The pastor and deacons shall be entitled to the same steps as other church members and be subject to the same discipline.
- (B) Members are expected to demonstrate special loyalty and concern for one another. When a member becomes aware of an offense of such magnitude that it hinders spiritual growth and testimony, he is to go alone to the offending party and seek to restore his brother. Before he goes, he should first examine himself. When he goes, he should go with a spirit of humility and have the goal of restoration.
- (C) If reconciliation is not reached, a second member, either a deacon or the pastor, is to accompany the one seeking to resolve the matter. This second step should also be preceded by self-examination and exercised in a spirit of humility with the goal of restoration.
- (D) If the matter is still unresolved after the steps outlined in subsections (B) and (C) have been taken, the discipline committee, as the church representatives Biblically responsible for putting down murmuring, shall hear the matter. If the matter is not resolved during the hearing before the discipline committee,

the committee shall recommend to the members of the church that they, after self-examination, make an effort personally to go to the offending member and seek that member's restoration.

- (E) If the matter is still unresolved after the steps outlined in subsections (B), (C), and (D) have been taken, such members who refuse to repent and be restored are to be removed from the membership of the church upon a majority vote of the membership present at a meeting called for the purpose of considering disciplinary action.
- (F) No matter may be heard by the discipline committee or the church unless the steps outlined in subsections (B) and (C) have been taken, except in the case of a public offense.
- (G) If an unrepentant offending party is removed from the church membership, all contact with him from that point forward (except by family members) must be for the sake of restoration.
- (H) The procedures provided in this section are based on Matt. 18:15-20; Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Cor. 2:1-11; Gal. 6:1; 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6, 10-15; 1 Tim. 5:19-20; and Titus 3:10-11.

SECTION 3.05—TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP

Members not under the disciplinary process of Section 3.04 may request that letters of transfer be sent to another church. Those desiring to unite with a church not of our faith and practice may not be given a letter of transfer but may be granted a letter of dismissal

SECTION 3.06—TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

- (A) The membership of any individual member shall be automatically terminated without notice if the member in question has not attended a regular worship service of the church in the preceding six months. Upon good cause being shown to the pastor or discipline committee, this provision for termination may be waived in the case of any individual member at the discretion of the pastor or discipline committee. Excluded from this termination provision are college students, military personnel, shut-ins, missionaries, evangelists and others who are legitimately unable to attend services.
- (B) No member of this church may hold membership in another church, except as outlined in section 3.07. If any member unites in membership with another church, that person is automatically terminated, without notice, from membership in this church.
- (C) A member may resign at any time, but no letter of transfer, or written statement of good standing, will be issued upon such resignation. A letter of dismissal may be granted.
- (D) No member of this church may bring a lawsuit against the church. If any member threatens to bring, or brings a lawsuit against the church, its staff, its officers, teachers, or any member of the church, that person is automatically terminated, without notice, from membership in this church.

SECTION 3.07—ASSOCIATE / NON-RESIDENT MEMBERSHIP

- (A) Those who maintain residence in another locale, and who live in the Ruskin area for a portion of the year may unite with First Baptist Church of Ruskin as Associate members, while maintaining membership in their home church. Associate members have all the rights, responsibilities and restriction

of resident members, with these exceptions: Associate members may not serve as a church officer; Associate members do not enjoy voting privileges during business / administration meetings.

ARTICLE 4 – OFFICERS

SECTION 4.01—CHURCH OFFICERS

The church officers are pastor (Article 5, Section 5.01), deacon (Article 5, Section 5.02), minister of records (clerk) (Article 5, Section 5.03), minister of finance (treasurer) (Article 5, Section 5.04). One person may hold two or more offices, except that of pastor. The pastor, from time to time as he deems appropriate, may appoint other church officers, subject to a confirmation vote of the church membership.

SECTION 4.02—DESIGNATION OF CORPORATE OFFICERS

As an accommodation to legal relationships outside the church, the pastor shall serve as president of the corporation; the chairman of the board of deacons shall serve as vice president of the corporation; the minister of records shall serve as secretary of the corporation; and the minister of finances shall serve as treasurer of the corporation.

SECTION 4.03—ELIGIBILITY FOR OFFICE

- (A) The church shall not install or retain an officer who fails to adhere to, or expresses disagreement with, the Statement of Faith. All church officers, upon request of the pastor, shall affirm their agreement with the Statement of Faith (as set forth in Article 2).
- (B) All church officers must be approved initially and thereafter annually by the pastor in order for them to commence or continue in their offices.
- (C) Only church members are eligible for election or appointment to any church office or position.

SECTION 4.04—TERMS OF OFFICE

- (A) The relationship between the pastor and the church shall be permanent unless dissolved at the option of either party by the giving of a month's notice, or less by mutual consent. The calling of a pastor or severance of the relationship between the pastor and the church may be considered at any regular church administration meeting, provided notice to that effect shall have been given from the pulpit to the church two Sundays prior to said regular church administration meeting. A three-fourths majority of the eligible members present and voting shall be required to call a pastor or to sever the relationship between the pastor and the church. Disciplinary removal of the pastor from office automatically terminates his membership. A restoration to membership after disciplinary removal will be subject to the requirements of Section 3.01(D).
- (B) The term of service for deacons shall be three years, the first year being served as a probationary period. At the expiration of the term of service deacons may be re-elected or re-appointed.

- (C) The term of service for all other offices and positions in the church, shall be one year, at the expiration of which they may be re-elected or re-appointed.
- (D) A vacancy occurring in any office or board, except in the case of the pastor may be filled at any regular church business/administration meeting. (see section 4.01)
- (E) All elected and appointed officers shall serve in their respective offices until their successors are duly elected or appointed.
- (F) Members of the board of deacons may be removed from office for unbiblical conduct, as determined by the other board members, upon a majority vote of the remaining members of the board of deacons.

SECTION 4.05—ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The election of officers by the church membership, if needed, shall occur during the first quarter of the year, at a church administration/business meeting.

SECTION 4.06 ---ELECTON OF PASTOR

The election of the pastor by the church membership shall occur at a special meeting of the church called for that purpose by public notice given on two Sundays preceding the date set for the meeting. Balloting shall be written and election requires a three fourths (75%) majority. Before being presented to the church for election the pulpit committee (deacon board) shall have thoroughly investigated the history of the candidate relative to his schooling, business practices and affairs, doctrinal, spiritual, emotional, and moral stability, and evidence of the Lord’s blessing on his previous pastorates and Christian experiences. Only one candidate at a time may be brought before the church. The pastor shall continue in the office until he resigns or his resignation is requested by a three fourths (75%) majority of the voting members present at a specially called business meeting that has been announced publicly for at least two Sundays preceding the meeting. In the dissolution of the pastor and church relationship, a thirty (30) day period of time shall be given by the party initiating the move, unless a shorter time period can be agreed upon by both parties.

SECTION 4.07—PASTORAL OVERSIGHT OF OFFICERS AND STAFF

- (A) On the condition that they shall become a member of the church upon assuming their duties, the pastor may hire associates and assistants to assist the pastor in carrying out his God-given responsibilities.
- (B) All church staff, whether paid or volunteer, shall be under the supervision of the pastor who has the sole authority to dismiss the same. No employee or volunteer shall be hired, appointed, or retained who fails to adhere to or expresses disagreement with the Statement of Faith.

ARTICLE 5 – DUTIES AND POWERS OF OFFICERS

SECTION 5.01—THE PASTOR

- (A) The pastor shall be a properly ordained Baptist minister.
- (B) The pastor shall preach the Gospel regularly and shall be at liberty to preach the whole counsel of the Word of God as the Lord leads him. He shall administer the ordinances of the church, act as moderator at all church meetings for the transaction of church matters, supervise the teaching ministries of the church, and tenderly watch over the spiritual interests of the membership.
- (C) The pastor shall appoint the members of the various committees at a church business/administration meeting (Section 4:05). He shall serve as the president of the corporation. He shall publicly inform all newly elected officers of the particular function and the responsibilities of their respective offices. He shall extend the right hand of fellowship to all new members on behalf of the church and perform such other duties as generally appertain to such a position. The pastor shall be free to choose the means and methods by which he exercises the ministry that God has given him.
- (D) All appointments for public worship and Bible study and the arrangements thereof, including time and place and the use of the property belonging to the church for purposes other than the stated appointments, shall be under the control of the pastor.
- (E) The pastor is to be the moderator and head of all church boards and committees as are required for the effective operation of the church.
- (F) The pastor is to be Biblical qualified for his office according to the standards of 1 Tim 3:1-7.

SECTION 5.02—THE BOARD OF DEACONS

- (A) The board of deacons shall assist the pastor, in such manner as he shall request, in promoting the spiritual welfare of the church, in conducting the religious services, and in performing all other work of the church. They shall make provision for the observance of the ordinances of the church. They shall, if requested by the pastor, consider applications for church membership. They shall, in cooperation with the pastor, disburse any benevolence funds. They shall assist the pastor in visitation and all other evangelistic efforts of the church. The board of deacons shall assist the pastor in caring for the administrative needs of the church's various ministries as requested by the pastor. They shall provide the pulpit supply and choose a moderator for church meetings if the office of pastor is vacant. Upon the death, resignation, or dismissal of the pastor, the board of deacons will act as pulpit committee.
- (B) Immediately following the annual church business/administration meeting (Section 4:05), the board of deacons shall assemble and elect, from their own number, a chairman who shall be vice president of the corporation, a vice chairman, and a secretary.
- (C) In the absence of the pastor, the chairman of the deacons automatically shall be responsible to moderate the church business meetings.
- (D) The board of deacons shall constitute the board of trustees of the corporation. The board of trustees shall exercise only the following specific powers, upon authorization by a majority vote of the members present at a duly called church business/administration meeting:
 1. To purchase, hold, lease, or otherwise acquire real and personal property on behalf of the church, and to take real and personal property by will, gift, or bequest on behalf of the church;
 2. To sell, convey, alienate, transfer, lease, assign, exchange, or otherwise dispose of, and to mortgage, pledge, or otherwise encumber the real and personal property of the church, to borrow

money and incur indebtedness for the purpose and the use of the church; to cause to be executed, issued, and delivered for the indebtedness, in the name of the church, promissory notes, bonds, debentures, or other evidence of indebtedness; and to secure repayment by deeds of trust, mortgages, or pledges; and

3. To exercise all powers necessary for the dissolution of the church corporation.

- (E) If for any reason, any member of the Board of Deacons shall be out of harmony with the program of the church, after an attempt of reconciliation by the pastor, and in case of his refusal, his office may be declared vacant by a majority vote of the deacon board.
- (F) Each deacon is to be Biblical qualified for his office according to the standards of 1 Tim 3:8-13.

SECTION 5.03—THE MINISTER OF RECORDS (CHURCH CLERK)

The minister of records shall:

- (A) Certify and keep at the office of the church, the original bylaws or a copy, including all amendments or alterations to the bylaws;
- (B) Keep at the place where the bylaws or a copy are kept a record of the proceedings of meetings of the board of deacons, with the time and place of holding, the notice of meeting given, the names of these present at the meetings;
- (C) Sign, certify or attest documents as may be required by law;
- (D) See that all notices are duly given in accordance with the provisions of these bylaws. (In case of the absence or disability of the secretary, or his or her refusal or neglect to act, notice may be given and served by the pastor or by the chairman of the board of deacons.);
- (E) Be custodian of the records of the church, including the membership roll, baptisms, and certificates of ordination, licenses and commissions;
- (F) See that the reports, statements, certificates, and all other documents and records required by law are properly kept and filed;
- (G) Exhibit at all reasonable times to proper persons on terms provided by law the bylaws and minutes of proceedings of the board of deacons or the minutes of the meetings of the church members;
- (H) Keep an account of any special events in the life of the church which are of historical interest;
- (I) Keep all records at the office of the church and deliver them to any successor upon leaving office;
- (J) Serve as the secretary of the corporation.

SECTION 5.04—THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (TREASURER)

The minister of finance shall:

- (A) Have charge and custody of, and be responsible for, all funds of the corporation, and deposit all funds in the name of the church in banks, trust companies, or other depositories as shall be selected by the pastor or the board of deacons;
- (B) Receive, and give receipt for all contributions, gifts, and donations to the church;
- (C) Disburse or cause to be disbursed, the funds of the church as may be directed by the pastor, the board of deacons, taking proper vouchers for the disbursements;
- (D) Keep and maintain adequate and correct accounts of the church's properties and business transactions including account of its assets, liabilities, receipts, disbursements, and capital;
- (E) Make all expenditures of the church (except miscellaneous petty cash disbursements) by check;
- (F) When and as requested, render to the pastor and the board of deacon's accounts of all his/her transactions as minister of finance and of the financial condition of the church;
- (G) Present a written report of itemized disbursements each month to the pastor and the board of deacons at and make a general report for the year at the annual church administration meeting;
- (H) Keep all church financial records at the office of the church and deliver them to any successor upon leaving office;
- (I) Serve as treasurer of the corporation.

SECTION 5.05—ASSOCIATE PASTORS

Under the direction and guidance of the pastor, the associate pastor(s) of the church shall assist the pastor in carrying out the ministries of the church.

SECTION 5.06—INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

A public installation service in which all newly elected officers of the church are to be dedicated to their respective offices and the installation of newly elected deacons shall be held at a public church service following their election at the church business/administration meeting (Section 4.05).

ARTICLE 6 – MEETINGS

SECTION 6.01—MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

Unless otherwise determined by the pastor, the church shall meet each Sunday for public worship both morning and evening and at least once during the week for Bible study and prayer.

SECTION 6.02—MEETINGS FOR CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

- (A) The annual church business/administration meeting shall be held in the first quarter of each year. A quorum shall consist of the members present.

- (B) All church business/administration meetings shall be opened and closed with prayer for divine guidance and blessing.
- (C) The moderator shall determine the rules of procedure according to his sense of fairness and common sense, giving all members a reasonable opportunity to be heard on a matter. The moderator is the final authority on questions of procedure, and his decision is final and controlling.
- (D) For any meeting under this article, the moderator, in his sole discretion, shall have full and unilateral authority to require nonmembers to leave the meeting room and to order the immediate removal of any member or other person present who is deemed by the moderator to be disruptive to the proceedings by act or presence. The moderator shall have full authority to order the removal of all children (ages to be determined by the moderator) if the moderator determines, in his sole discretion, that circumstances so warrant. If the moderator determines that compliance with his order of removal is unsatisfactory, the moderator may, in his sole discretion, revoke the disruptive person's right to remain on the premises in accordance with Section 3.03(C) and treat the person as a trespasser.

SECTION 6.03—SPECIAL MEETINGS

- (A) The pastor (or deacons if the office of pastor is vacant or the pastor is the subject of possible disciplinary action) may call a special meeting by giving notice of such a meeting and the purpose for which it is called to the church from the pulpit at least one Sunday and not less than one week prior to said meeting. A meeting for the calling of a pastor or the severance of the relationship between the church and pastor shall be called in accordance with the provision of Section 4.04(A).
- (B) Bible conferences, missionary conferences, and revivals may be held as the pastor deems beneficial.

SECTION 6.04—FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year of the church shall begin January 1st and end December 31st.
The fiscal year of the Christian school shall begin July 1st and end June 30th.

ARTICLE 7 – MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

SECTION 7.01—PURPOSE

The church believes that it is to provide the members' children with an education which is based upon and consistent with Biblical teachings. The church believes that the home and church are responsible before God for providing a Christian education. In order to assist the church's families with their obligation to Biblically train their children, the church operates a Christian Day School. This school is called Ruskin Christian School. To this end, the church shall engage in ministries in education in keeping with the following dictates.

SECTION 7.02—CHURCH PARTICIPATION

All educational programs or courses of instruction formulated and offered by the church shall be primarily for the benefit of the members of the church; however, the pastor may permit non church members to participate in church educational programs or courses of instruction if he deems it in the best interest of the church.

SECTION 7.03—STAFF MEMBERSHIP

All instructors, teachers, and administrators shall be members of this church, unless hired to work in the Christian day school and previously a member of another church of like faith within the area. This provision shall not apply to visiting missionaries, evangelists, or preachers engaged for the purpose of delivering sermons, conducting revivals, or other special meetings on a temporary basis.

SECTION 7.04—STATEMENT OF FAITH ACCORD

All educational programs or courses of instruction shall be taught and presented in full accord with the Statement of Faith of the church. The church shall not hire, appoint, or retain any employee or volunteer for its educational programs that fails to adhere to or expresses disagreement with the Statement of Faith.

SECTION 7.05—UNITY

All educational programs or courses of instruction shall be conducted as an integral and inseparable ministry of the church.

SECTION 7.06—TEACHING

All educational programs or courses of instruction shall be conducted consistent with the teaching of the inerrant Word of God. Any assertion or belief which conflicts with or questions a Bible truth is a pagan deception and distortion of the truth which will be disclaimed as false. It is the responsibility of every instructor or teacher to present the inerrant Word of God as the sole infallible source of knowledge and wisdom.

SECTION 7.07—CHRISTIAN WALK

All administrators, instructors, and teachers and other staff, whether paid or volunteer, shall continue or adopt and maintain a lifestyle consistent with the precepts taught by the church, whether in or out of the classroom. All staff shall be under the supervision of the pastor who has the sole authority to hire, appoint, or dismiss the same as stated herein.

SECTION 7.08—HIERARCHY OF AUTHORITY

- (A) The pastor shall be the final authority on all matters relating to the ministry of education. The pastor shall have the authority to approve or disapprove any decision or recommendation of the board of deacons on all matters relating to the ministry of education.
 - 1. On the condition that they shall become a member of the church upon assuming duties, the pastor may hire administrators and principals to assist the pastor in carrying out the ministry of education.
 - 2. On the condition that they shall become a member of the church upon assuming duties, the pastor may hire teachers and support staff to assist the pastor in carrying out the ministry of education.
- (B) The board of deacons shall act as a steering, advisory and accountability committee, assisting and advising the pastor on all matters relating to the ministry of education, and may appoint a parent advisory group as deemed necessary.

SECTION 7.09-OFFICIAL SCHOOL RECORDS

- (A) Should Ruskin Christian School cease to continue operation, the school will provide official student records, by the law, to the County School Superintendent and/or in accordance to county and state requirements at that time.

ARTICLE 8 – ORDINATION

SECTION 8.01—ORDINATION QUALIFICATIONS

Any member of this church or its mission churches, who gives evidence of a genuine call of God into the work of the ministry and possesses the qualifications stated in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9, may be ordained, or licensed, as a minister of the Gospel.

SECTION 8.02—ORDINATION PROCEDURE

- (A) Upon a conference with the pastor and after the pastor has approved the candidate for ordination, the pastor shall call a council to examine and pass on the qualification of the candidate. The ordination council shall consist of ordained ministers of like faith invited to participate in the examination of the candidate.
- (B) If the candidate is found worthy of ordination by the council, the ordination council may ordain the candidate on behalf of the church.
- (C) The pastor and the chairman of the deacons shall arrange for the ordination service.

ARTICLE 9 – INDEMNIFICATION

SECTION 9.01—ACTIONS SUBJECT TO INDEMNIFICATION

The church may indemnify any person who was or is a party or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending or completed action, suit, or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative, or investigative, including all appeals (other than an action by or in the right of the church) by reason of the fact that the person is or was a pastor, deacon, officer, employee, or agent of the church, against expenses, including attorneys' fees, judgments, fines, and amounts paid in settlement actually and reasonably incurred by him in connection with the action, suit, or proceeding; and if that person acted in good faith and in a manner he reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the church and, with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, had no reasonable cause to believe his conduct was unlawful. The termination of any action, suit, or proceeding by judgment, order, settlement, conviction, or on a plea of *nolo contendere* or its equivalent, shall not, of itself, create a presumption that the person did not act in good faith and in a manner that he reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the church and, with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, had no reasonable cause to believe that his or her conduct was unlawful.

SECTION 9.02—EXPENSES SUBJECT TO INDEMNIFICATION

To the extent that a pastor, deacon, officer, employee, or agent has been successful on the merits or otherwise in defense of any action, suit, or proceeding referred to in this Article, or in defense of any claim, issue, or matter in that action, suit, or proceeding, he or she may be indemnified against expenses, including attorneys' fees, actually and reasonably incurred by him or her in connection with the action, suit, or proceeding.

SECTION 9.03—LIMITATIONS OF INDEMNIFICATION

Any indemnification made under this Article, may be made by the church only as authorized in the specific case on a determination that indemnification of the pastor, deacon, officer, employee, or agent is proper in the circumstances because he has met the applicable standard of conduct set forth in Section 1 of this Article. The determination shall be made (a) by a majority vote of a quorum consisting of the pastor and deacons who were not and are not parties to or threatened with the action, suit, or proceeding; (b) if the described quorum is not obtainable or if a majority vote of a quorum of disinterested deacons so directs, by independent legal counsel in a written opinion; or (c) by a majority vote of the members of the church.

SECTION 9.04—TIMING OF INDEMNIFICATION

Expenses of each person seeking indemnification under this Article, may be paid by the church as they are incurred, in advance of the final disposition of the action, suit, or proceeding, as authorized by the board of deacons in the specific case, on receipt of an undertaking by or on behalf of the pastor, deacon, officer, employee, or agent to repay the amount if it is ultimately determined that he or she is not qualified to be indemnified by the church.

SECTION 9.05—EXTENT OF INDEMNIFICATION

The indemnification provided by this Article shall be deemed to be discretionary unless otherwise required as a matter of law or under any agreement or provided by insurance purchased by the church, both as to action of each person seeking indemnification under this Article in his official capacity and as to action in another capacity while holding that office, and may continue as to a person who has ceased to be a pastor, deacon, officer, employee, or agent and may inure to the benefit of the heirs, executors, and administrators of that person.

SECTION 9.06—INSURANCE

The church may purchase and maintain insurance on behalf of any person who is or was a pastor, deacon, officer, employee, or agent of the church against any liability asserted against him and incurred by him in that capacity, or arising out of his status in that capacity, whether or not the church would have the power to indemnify him against liability under the provisions of this Article.

ARTICLE 10 – COMMITTEES

SECTION 10.01—STANDING COMMITTEES

The pastor (or the board of deacons if the office of pastor is vacant) shall appoint standing committees and designate a chairperson for each standing committee and, except when otherwise specifically provided in these

bylaws, shall determine the membership of each standing committee. In addition to the discipline committee, the pastor may appoint other standing committees as he deems appropriate.

SECTION 10.02—SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The board of deacons, in its discretion, may create special committees to provide the board with advice and information regarding matters submitted to the committee by the board for consideration. The committee shall have no authority to act on behalf of the corporation. The members of the committee shall be chosen by a majority vote of the board of deacons and shall serve solely at the pleasure of the board of deacons. The special committee shall be subject to the control and direction of the board of deacons at all times.

ARTICLE 11 – DESIGNATED CONTRIBUTIONS

From time to time the church, in the exercise of its religious, educational, and charitable purposes, may establish various funds to accomplish specific goals. Contributors may suggest uses for their contributions, but all suggestions shall be deemed advisory rather than mandatory in nature. All contributions made to specific funds or otherwise designated shall remain subject to the exclusive control and discretion of the pastor and the board of deacons. No fiduciary obligation shall be created by any designated contribution made to the church other than to use the contribution for the general furtherance of any of the purposes stated in Section 1.02.

ARTICLE 12 – BINDING ARBITRATION

SECTION 12.01—SUBMISSION TO ARBITRATION

Believing that lawsuits between believers are prohibited by Scripture, all members of this church agree to submit to binding arbitration any matters which cannot otherwise be resolved, and expressly waive any and all rights in law and equity to bringing any civil disagreement before a court of law, except that judgment upon the award rendered by the arbitrator may be entered in any court having jurisdiction thereof.

SECTION 12.02—NOTICE OF ARBITRATION

In the event of any dispute, claim, question, or disagreement arising out of or relating to these bylaws or any other church matter, the parties shall use their best efforts to settle such disputes, claims, questions, or disagreement as befits Christians. To this effect, they shall consult and negotiate with each other in good faith and, recognizing their mutual interests not to disgrace the name of Christ, seek to reach a just and equitable solution. If they do not reach such solution within a period of sixty (60) days, then upon notice by either party to the other, disputes, claims, questions, or differences shall be finally settled by arbitration as described in section 12.01, above, and such Procedures for Arbitration as are adopted pursuant to Section 12.04, below.

SECTION 12.03—LIMITATIONS ON ARBITRATION DECISIONS

- (A) Should any dispute involve matters of church discipline, the arbitrators shall be limited to determining whether the procedures for church discipline as outlined under Section 3.04, were followed.
- (B) Should any dispute involve the removal from office of the pastor or any church officer, the arbitrators shall be limited to determining whether the procedures set forth in Section 3.04 were followed.

SECTION 12.04—ARBITRATION PROCEDURES

The Procedures for Arbitration shall be as adopted by the pastor and the board of deacons.

ARTICLE 13 – TAX-EXEMPT PROVISIONS

SECTION 13.01—PRIVATE INUREMENT

No part of the net earnings of the church shall inure to the benefit of or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the church shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for the services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Section 1.02 hereof.

SECTION 13.02—POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

No substantial part of the activities of the church shall be the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. The church shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

SECTION 13.03—DISSOLUTION

Upon the dissolution of the church, the trustees shall, after paying or making provision for payment of all the liabilities of the church, dispose of all of the assets of the church to such organization or organizations formed and operated exclusively for religious purposes as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law), as the trustees shall determine. Assets may be distributed only to tax-exempt organizations which agree with the church's Statement of Faith.

SECTION 13.04—RACIAL NONDISCRIMINATION

The church shall have a racially nondiscriminatory policy and, therefore, shall not discriminate against members, applicants, students, and others on the basis of race, color, or national or ethnic origin.

SECTION 13.05—LIMITATION OF ACTIVITIES

Notwithstanding any other provision of these bylaws, the church shall not, except to an insubstantial degree, engage in any activities or exercise any powers that are not in furtherance of the purposes stated in Section 1.02.

ARTICLE 14 – AMENDMENTS

These bylaws may be revised or amended by a majority vote of the members present and voting at any regular church administration meeting, provided that said revision or amendment has been submitted in writing and announced from the pulpit fourteen (14) days before the vote is taken.

ADOPTION

These bylaws were adopted by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting at a duly called meeting of the church in which a quorum was present.

These bylaws supersede any other bylaws of the First Baptist Church of Ruskin, Florida, USA

Date

Minister of Records

PROCEDURES FOR ARBITRATION

SECTION 1—SCOPE OF ARBITRATION

The parties must, prior to the selection of arbitrators, agree to the scope of the matters to be considered by the arbitrators. In doing so the parties must conduct themselves with the utmost courtesy as befits believers in Jesus Christ. If the parties cannot agree upon the scope of the dispute for arbitration, the scope shall be determined by the arbitrators.

SECTION 2—SUBMISSION TO ARBITRATION

- (A) The parties, as Christians, believing that lawsuits between Christians are prohibited by Scripture, and having agreed, according to Article 12 of the church bylaws, to submit disputes to binding arbitration, and to waive any legal right to take the dispute to a court of law, will refer and submit any and all disputes, differences, and controversies whatsoever within the agreed scope of arbitration to a panel of three arbitrators, to be selected as follows:
1. All arbitrators must be born-again Christians of good reputation in the community and who affirm the church's Statement of Faith in its entirety.
 2. Each party shall submit a list of three proposed arbitrators to the other party, and the other party will choose one of the three proposed arbitrators to serve on the panel.
 3. The third arbitrator will be selected by mutual agreement of the other two arbitrators.
 4. In selecting the arbitrators, each party shall act in good faith in choosing Christian arbitrators who have no prior knowledge of the facts leading up to the dispute, are not related to or close friends with the selecting party, and who will act impartially and with fundamental fairness.
 5. No arbitrator may be an attorney.
 6. No arbitrator may be employed or ever have been employed by, or under the authority of, either party or any other arbitrator.
 7. The arbitrators will be selected as soon as possible but no later than 30 days after the parties have agreed to the scope of the arbitration.
 8. The arbitration will be held at a neutral site agreed to by the arbitrators.
- (B) The arbitrators shall, subject to the provisions of these procedures, arbitrate the dispute according to the terms of these procedures, the Bible as interpreted by the church's Statement of Faith, and any applicable church documents.
- (C) Each party may be represented by counsel throughout the process at the party's own expense. Discovery will be allowed as needed, as determined in the discretion of the arbitrators. Formal rules of evidence shall not apply.

SECTION 3—TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF ARBITRATION

- (A) The arbitrators shall have full power to make such regulations and to give such orders and directions, as they shall deem expedient in respect to a determination of the matters and differences referred to them.
- (B) The arbitrators shall hold the arbitration hearing as soon as possible, but no later than thirty (30) days after the selection of the third arbitrator.
- (C) There shall be no stenographic record of the proceedings, and all proceedings shall be closed to the media and any other individuals not directly involved in the proceedings.
- (D) Normally, the hearing shall be completed within three (3) hours. The length of the hearing, however, may be extended by the arbitrators in their discretion or an additional hearing may be scheduled by the arbitrators to be held promptly.
- (E) There will be no post-hearing briefs.
- (F) The arbitrators are to make and publish their award, in writing, signed by each of them concerning the matters referred, to be delivered to the parties no later than 48 hours from the conclusion of the hearing, unless otherwise agreed by the parties. The arbitrators may, in their discretion, furnish an opinion.

SECTION 4—CONDUCT AND RULES OF HEARING

- (A) The arbitrators may, in their absolute discretion, receive and consider any evidence they deem relevant to the dispute, whether written or oral, without regard to any formal rules of evidence.
- (B) The parties and their respective witnesses must, when required by the arbitrators, attend and submit to examination and cross-examination under oath as to all or any of the matters referred to in the proceedings and to produce and deposit with the arbitrators all or any evidence within their possession or control concerning such matters.
- (C) If a party defaults in any respect referred to in Subsection 4.2, above, the arbitrators may proceed with the arbitration in their discretion as if no such evidence were in existence, insofar as it may be favorable to the party in default.
- (D) All presentations shall be controlled by the arbitrators. Any disputes regarding procedure shall be decided solely by the arbitrators.

SECTION 5—DUTIES OF ARBITRATORS

- (A) The arbitrators are to receive all evidence, prayerfully consider such evidence in an impartial manner, and render a decision which, based upon Scriptural principles, is fair to all parties.
- (B) The arbitrators have full power to order mutual releases to be executed by the parties, and either of the parties failing; such orders shall have the effect of a release, and may be duly acknowledged as such.
- (C) In the event that either party or a witness for either party shall fail to attend the arbitration hearing, after such written notice to such party as the arbitrators shall deem reasonable, the arbitrators may proceed in the absence of such party or witnesses without further notice.

SECTION 6—DECISION OF ARBITRATORS

- (A) It is preferred that the arbitrators reach a unanimous decision, but if a unanimous decision cannot be obtained, a majority decision will be accepted. The written decision of a majority of the arbitrators shall be final and binding on all parties, and judgment upon the award rendered by the arbitrators may be entered in any court having jurisdiction thereof. There is no appeal from the decision of the arbitrators.
- (B) The decision of the arbitrators is to be kept confidential by all parties for a period of one year. For purposes of these procedures, the church membership may be informed of the decision if the church or any church pastors, officers, trustees, employees, or board members were a party to the proceeding.
- (C) Should any party commence legal proceedings against another party with respect to the agreed scope of the dispute or the binding decision of the arbitrators, with the exception of an action to enforce the decision of the arbitrators, that party shall pay to the other party all expenses of said proceedings, including reasonable attorneys' fees. In the event it becomes necessary for one party to commence legal proceedings to enforce the decision of the arbitrators, the non-prevailing party must bear all of the costs of said proceedings, including reasonable attorneys' fees.

SECTION 7—PARTIES TO COOPERATE

No party shall unreasonably delay or otherwise prevent or impede the arbitration proceedings. No party will involve the news media in the dispute in any way. No party shall publicize the dispute in any way to anyone not a party to the proceedings, except as permitted by the arbitrators and except that a party may disclose the proceedings of this arbitration to his or her spouse, legal counsel, accountants, insurance carrier, and as otherwise required by law.

SECTION 8—COSTS AND EXPENSES

Each party shall pay his or her own costs and expenses related to presenting the party's case to the arbitrators. The costs of the arbitration, including any fees for the arbitrators is to be shared equally by both parties.

SECTION 9—COMMANDMENTS

These Procedures for Arbitration may be revised or amended by a majority vote of the board of deacons present and voting at any regular board meeting.

SECTION 10—ADOPTION

- (A) These Procedures for Arbitration were adopted by a majority vote of the board of deacons at which a quorum was present.
- (B) These Procedures for Arbitration supersede any other Procedures for Arbitration previously adopted by the board of deacons, if any exist.

Date Approved

Chairman, Board of Deacons